Rejuvenate the Public Library as Community Information Centre: A Case Study of District Central Library, Dharwad

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the present status of district central library, Dharwad and an attempt has been made to re-focusing of public libraries towards the idea of Community Information Centre, to contribute towards community development by fulfilling the information requirement of community. This new idea of the public library as community information centre creates greater links and addition among the public library and its community. Study shows that the District Central Library of Dharwad is failed to provide Community Information Service to the community members of the District also the resources of the District central library is not adequate to fulfill the needs and requirements of the different community groups.

KeyTerms: Public Library, Community Information Centre, District Central Library, Public Library Services.

INTRODUCTION

In the transition period to market economy, public libraries are an important subject of the civil society in India. The economic problems which are the focus of the state management affect negatively the libraries. The reduced attention of the state towards them, the lack of national strategy for their development, adequate financing and professional apathy etc, led to adverse consequences. Public libraries do not play their special role in the social, cultural, and educational process as their position is not protected in the changing networked environment. Public libraries are not ensured with financing so that they could enrich their books and periodical collections, computer equipment and information technology. An analysis of published literature shows that public libraries in India are not active participants in the social, economic, cultural and educational process up to the expectation of the knowledge society.

The problems of public libraries are numerous and the discussion for their poor state is held only among librarian, institutions and in the professional gathering. The professional associations in India have organized a good number of seminars, conferences and initiatives for encouraging the development of public libraries but regretfully the results are only humble.

NEEDS

During the past, Public library has been taking the total community in general and did not stress the community information. Now in view of the socio-economic pattern of the society there is every need to see the public library as an agency which emphasizes the development of various groups of the community by providing relevant information. Libraries do not grow in vacuum. They function in societies. Their functions are determined by social forces. The library functions should change with the changing social conditions. Public library is closely linked with the community and has the obligation to provide information needed by the community. But the situation in the public libraries in Dharwad district when considered as community information centres is not encouraging. As Sarada points out: The materials and services of the library are nonresponsive to the community.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ali Anvar conducted a study on Community Information Services where the author shows another Community Information Services (CIS) Centre that was introduced by public libraries. Library services in South East Asia which do not cover most of the
rural people, venture into CIS is suitable to identify if there is actual requirement. The author shows how the CIS is meeting up the demand of information and discusses different CIS models. Bhattacharjee pointed out in his article “Community Information Centre project in India: connecting the far flung” discuss different initiatives that have been taken by the National Informatics Centre (NIC) under the auspices of the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (MCIT), Government of India. Where the Community Information Centre (CIC) Project is meant to provide Internet connectivity and citizen services delivery. The Project envisages a community centre with Internet facility through V-SAT at each administrative block. Rachel Scott found in his article five aspects of public libraries as agencies of community development: (i) how libraries serve as a medium to access information and to learn, (ii) how libraries support social inclusion and equity, (iii) how libraries promote community engagement, (iv) how libraries create a bridge to resources and community participation, and (v) how libraries encourage economic vitality within the community. The goal of this article is to provide real examples of library community development. The focal point here, therefore, is on the specific strategies that libraries employed to create and operate library programs that effectively and efficiently built a library community. Krishnamurthy and others study reveals that the importance of rural libraries in the development of rural masses in the changing context of the society as well as the role of rural libraries as a community information centre in disseminating the necessary information for their day to day problem. The paper also emphasizes on the special programmes of the government for development enhancement of the quality of life in the rural areas of the Karnataka State. It is highlights that the rural libraries should play a role of Community Information Centres and should be active in creating awareness among the rural community by providing suitable need-based information for the appropriate utilization of various schemes and programmes of the government.

Public Library System

Public libraries are a world-wide phenomenon. They occur in a variety of societies, in differing cultures and at different stages of development. Although the varied contexts in which they operate inevitably result in differences in the services they provide, and the way those services are delivered, they normally have characteristics in common, which can be defined as follows.

A public library is an organization established, supported and funded by the community, either through local, regional or national government or through some other form of community organization. It provides access to knowledge, information and works of the imagination through a range of resources and services and is equally available to all members of the community regardless of race, nationality, age, gender, religion, language, disability, economic and employment status and educational attainment.

Community Information Centre (CIC): The Concept

The expression, community information is the outcome of the Second World War. To overcome the crisis and the need encountered by the people during the war in the form of queries like emergency regulations, missing relatives, evacuation and separation of family members, etc, rendering a service with the intention of providing appropriate information to the queries of the people was termed as neighborhood or community information; now such service has become a part and parcel of the public library system.

In an information age, the key function of the public library is to provide up-to-date facts and information to all the sections of the community. The Public Library Manifesto mission stated that, “ensuring access for citizens to all sorts of community information”. Information needs of various citizens may vary from person to person, but public library by its nomenclature should serve its best to provide and quench the users information desire. Some of the roles in providing information are:

- Providing access to information at all levels
- Collecting information about the local community and making it readily accessible, often in co-operation with other organizations
- Training people of all ages in the use of information and the associated technology
- Guiding users to the appropriate information sources
- Providing opportunities for disabled people to have independent access to information
- Acting as a gateway to the information world by making it accessible to all, thus helping to bridge the gap between ‘the information rich’ and ‘the information poor’.

District Central Library, Dharwad

District Central Library, Dharwad was initiated in 1974 with the first chief librarian J. C. Mahashetti. The District Central Library is a repository of intellectual’s activities. Since its establishment it has carved a position for itself in academic, literary and community circles of the beautiful city. The library has a regular rush of users representing a cross-section of the population of this region. The library has given an optimistic force to book-culture and related activities. The Head Office of the District central library situated in Dharwad city. There are Five District Central Library Branches throughout Dharwad District. They are at Kundgol, Kalaghatagi, Hebsoor, Annigeri and Navalgund. There Are 127 Panchayat Libraries comes under District Central Library, Dharwad. In Dharwad district each and every panchayats have Gram panchayat libraries. Total Membership of the District Central Library Dharwad is 20,500 and the daily users are 2, 250. The following are the broad categories and their percentile:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Childrens</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House Wives</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Age Persons</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academicians</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police Men</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Persons</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politicians</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Growth in Collections

District Central Library Dharwad has the total collection of books approximately 5 lakh, around 70 Periodicals and News Papers.
libraries. Lack of Information Literacy and awareness about CIS is another aspect. There is a lack of government cooperation in the development of services and unwillingness of staff to perform such assessments. Moreover, the information needs are not carried out. These include the lack of information desires. This must be done regularly, judiciously for libraries. There are several reasons for why the assessments of the community information needs are not performed. The most complex and essential activity is the assessment of information needs of the present and potential user. A resource is available for various competitive examinations like IAS, UGCNET, Railways, UPSC and other Govt. Jobs.

Library Services

- **Reference Service**: District Central Library being provided Bibliographical and Documentation based services to its 20,000 users among approximately 2250 users per day. Further, it is also providing referral service to its users as well as other.

- **Circulation Service**: District Central Library also providing facility of books rendering to home on the basis of membership charge. Three books can be borrowed for 15 days by a member. It is also providing facility of book reservation.

- **Study Circle (Competitive Books)**: Competitive books are available for various competitive examinations like IAS, UGCNET, Railways, UPSC and other Govt. Jobs.

- **Reading Room Facility**: It has a huge hall for general reading around 100 seats capacity, in addition to this It has also reading room facility at different sections of the library like Reference Section, Children Section etc.

- **Library at your Door-Step**: Library at your door-step facility is providing books on request to senior-citizens at their homes in Dharwad District.

- **Children Service**: This library providing special services to childrens.

- **Extension Services**: District Central Library of Dharwad Providing Some Extension Services Like, Book Exhibition, Debate, Film Shows etc.

### Barriers in Providing Community Information Service (CIS) through Public Libraries in Dharwad

As communities development Centre the library should fulfill the information needs of the present and potential user. A resource center failed to attract users without catering the information needs of the community. The most complicated but an essential activity in the provision of community information is the assessment of information desires. This must be done regularly, judiciously for libraries'. There are several reasons for why the assessments of information needs are not carried out. These include the lack of qualified and trained library personnel and financial resources and unwillingness of staff to perform such assessments moreover the lack of government co-operation in the development of libraries. Lack of Information Literacy and awareness about CIS and lack of personnel incentive to provide the community Information service to the people are also barriers in providing services in the library. Most of the people in Karnataka are living in rural areas and they are facing economic problems and are illiterate and they have no culture of reading and libraries are not able to attract them towards reading culture.

### SUGGESTIONS

- **Public Libraries Act 1965**
  The Karnataka Public Libraries Act 1965 should be modified while keeping in mind the latest developments in the field of information and communication technology (ICT). Then only it is possible to provide even minimum networked service for the urban and rural elite.

- **Use of ICT Applications in Public Library**
  H. K. Kaul, opined that ‘Our public library system in the India failed completely in bringing knowledge to the door steps of every human being. It is suggested to look at the problem, especially when the Information technologies now available at minimum price’. So as much as possible the public libraries should have the ICT facilities.

- **Automation & Networking**
  In India the public libraries are established throughout the country and located in all states, districts, talukas as well as village levels. In public libraries there has been no centralization, so while keeping in mind the recent developments in library automation all the public libraries should be computerized. Each and every public library in a Dharwad district must be linked through a networking system to share their resources and services. The district central library and their branch libraries of dharwad district must keep better correlation with other governmental and non-governmental agencies, experts of different fields to collect and share resources. So that it will be helpful to solve specific problems of member of the community.

- **Library Building**
  State Government and concerned department should facilitate the well structured building with all the necessary facilities and building should be situated at the central of the city or where people can access very easily especially in rural areas.

- **Library Personnel**
  Library personnel must take keen interest in providing library services and they must encourage all the reader to make use of the library very effectively and efficiently. And State Government in general and concerned authorities in particular must take keen interest while appointing the library personnel.

- **Mobile Library Service**
  The department of public libraries should provide the Mobile Library Service to the district for the effective implementation of the library service in the rural areas.

- **Panchayat Libraries**
  In Case of Panchayat Libraries, it is necessary that gram panchayat Presidents/Vice Presidents and other members should ensure proper financial support through voluntary contribution for improving the panchayat or rural libraries. For this purpose, the Department of Public Libraries may consider the possibilities of organizing a sort of workshop or awareness building camps to

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### Year-wise Expenditure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Books Expenditure</th>
<th>Expenditure on Periodicals and Newspaper</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>100000</td>
<td>50000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>110000</td>
<td>51000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-12</td>
<td>120000</td>
<td>55000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012-13</td>
<td>150000</td>
<td>60000</td>
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According to Public Library Expenditure, more money has been spent for procuring of books rather than Journals/Magazines. Expenditure over books shows that users of public library are increasingly using books rather than Journals and Magazines.
the elected gram panchayat members regarding the role of gram
panchayat in growth and development of the gram panchayat
libraries.

- **Acquisition of Material**
  The acquisition of the resources should be based on present and
  potentials needs of the community member. The book selection
  should be done very judiciously. Public Libraries should provide
  primary resources like journals and magazines including national
  and local newspapers on a variety of topics. (E.g. Business, Health
  and Lifestyle, Gardening, Science, Nature, History.)

- **Reference and General Information Services**
  All public libraries should have ‘reference’ sections, containing
  books and other materials which can be consulted in the library.
  Reference sections should be included resources such as
dictionaries, directories, encyclopedias, government
publications, yearbooks and atlases. Some reference material, in
particular business related material, should be available in CD-
ROM or over the Internet. And also has to provide contact details
and information on the services provided by the county council
or corporation and by government departments, including social
welfare information, etc.

- **Internet Services**
  La Rue said that ‘Given that the Internet has become an
indispensable tool for realizing a range of human rights,
combating inequality, and accelerating development and human
progress, ensuring universal access to the Internet should be a
priority for all states.’ A 2011 Special Rapporteur for Freedom of
Expression report to the UN Human Rights Council declared
internet access a fundamental enabler of human rights. Public
libraries need to establish Internet connection services to
providing the internet access to library users and the community.

- **Information About the Community**
  A guide should contain relevant information on the city, such as
restaurants, banks, hospitals, picnic spots chemists’ and
laundries, etc. This type of information will be helpful for many
users: new residents, visitors, etc.

- **Career Information**
  Library should provide career guidelines information which helps
the unemployed or people looking for new job opportunities.

**CONCLUSION**

In this present scenario information is regarded as an important
resource for socio-economic development of any society or
community. The access and effective use of information is crucial
and knowledge is a significant element of successfully living in
today’s world. The challenges before public libraries is to make
sure that their community people should have access to the
information to improve socio-economic condition and living
standards of the people. In this regard the district central library
and branch libraries of dharwad will have to play a key role in
providing up-to-date and authentic information to all the people of
the community without any discrimination.

Socio-economic development of a country or a state largely
depends on the organized information generation,
communication and distribution for the citizens. The major
objective of the public library is to acquire process, store and
disseminate the collected information to its users, which in turn
will facilitate to improve the skills and techniques or update the
knowledge of the users. The use of information will naturally
lead to enhanced development in the field of agriculture,
industries and crafts, etc, and results in the healthy growth of rural
areas.

The development of the community socially, educationally,
economically and culturally is possible only through proper
library services. This is positive librarianship and it is imperative
need for the community development. It is observed that the
Karnataka Public Library Act, 1965, has provided a sound
theoretical framework, but, unfortunately, the implementation
and execution of the provisions have not been adequate and
effective. The rural mass is lagging behind considerably when
compared with the urban mass, as far as obtaining the free library
services are concerned. Such a pathetic attitude has made less
impact on the use of libraries by the members of the society

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